

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Previously Presented) A folding knife, comprising:
  - a handle including an end face having a first locking element;
  - a blade pivotably connected to the handle in a manner allowing pivoting of the blade from a closed position in which the blade extends along the handle, to an open position in which the blade extends away from the handle;
  - a slot in the blade, the slot including a narrow region and an wide region;
  - a post having first and second knobs, and a neck portion extending between the first and second knobs, the neck portion positioned in the narrow region of the slot for sliding movement along the blade, the post being movable within the narrow region of the slot between a first position in which the post engages at least part of the first locking element in a manner preventing pivoting of the blade relative to the handle, and a second position spaced from the first locking element in which the blade is free to pivot relative to the handle;
  - a retaining element positioned in the wide region of the slot to prevent movement of the post into the wide region of the slot while permitting movement of the post between the first and second positions; and
  - the end face of the handle being configured such that, as the blade is pivoted from the closed position towards the open position, the post, when in the first position, is spaced from the end face of the handle for at least approximately 75% of the total travel of the blade from the closed position to the open position.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 1, wherein the first locking element includes a notched corner in the end face of the handle configured to receive the post.

4.-6. (Cancelled)

7. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 1, wherein the knobs are mounted co-axially on the ends of the neck portion of the post.

8.-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 1, further comprising a bias element configured to urge the post towards the end face of the handle.

12. (Original) The folding knife of claim 11, wherein the retaining element supports the bias element in the slot.

13. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 12, wherein the retaining element includes an elongate portion extending into the narrow region of the slot, and the elongate portion supports the bias element.

14. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 1, wherein the retaining element is configured to expand upon receipt of an expander, the folding knife further comprising an expander received by the retaining element, whereby the retaining element is secured in the slot.

15. (Original) The folding knife of claim 14, wherein the retaining element includes a hole configured to receive the expander.

16. (Original) The folding knife of claim 14, wherein the expander includes a ball bearing.

17. (Currently Amended) A folding knife, comprising:

a handle including an end with an exposed exterior edge surface, the exposed exterior edge surface having a latching corner separated from a remainder of the edge surface by a corner;

a blade pivotably connected to the handle so that the blade is configured to move between a closed position extending along the handle and an open position extending away from the handle, the blade including a slot extending therein and having a first portion and a second portion, the second portion being an end adjacent to the edge surface when the blade is in the open position; and

a post, slidably mounted in the slot, ~~the post, while in the end of the slot, being spaced from the edge surface such that, during blade motion from the closed position towards the open position, the post does not contact the edge surface until just prior to engaging the latching corner of the exposed exterior edge surface as the blade reaches the open position~~

a retaining element positioned in the first portion of the slot, the retaining element being configured to expand upon receipt of an expander; and  
an expander received by the retaining element.

18. (Original) The folding knife of claim 17, wherein the post includes a pin, and one or more enlarged ends connected to the pin.

19. (Currently Amended) The folding knife of claim 18, wherein the ~~slot~~ includes a first portion of the slot is configured to receive the enlarged ends of the pin, and a the second portion ~~including the end of the slot and being~~ configured to enable the pin to slidably engage the latching corner of the handle.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Currently Amended) The folding knife of claim ~~20~~17, further comprising a bias element configured to urge the post towards the end of the slot.

22. (Original) The folding knife of claim 21, wherein the retaining element supports the bias element in the slot.

23. (Original) The folding knife of claim 22, wherein the retaining element includes an elongate portion extending into the second portion of the slot, and the elongate portion supports the bias element.

24. (Currently Amended) The folding knife of claim ~~20~~17, wherein the ~~retaining element is configured to expand upon receipt of an expander, the folding knife further comprising an expander received by the retaining element, whereby the~~ retaining element is secured in the slot by the expander.

25. (Currently Amended) The folding knife of claim ~~24~~17, wherein the retaining element includes a hole configured to receive the expander.

26. (Currently Amended) The folding knife of claim ~~24~~17, wherein the expander includes a ball bearing.

27. (Previously Presented) A folding knife, comprising:  
a handle;

a blade pivotably connected to the handle so that the blade is configured to move between a closed position extending along the handle and an open position extending away from the handle, the blade including a slot, the slot including a wide portion and a narrow portion;

a locking mechanism configured to lock the blade in the open position, the locking mechanism including a post having a neck and one or more enlarged ends, the neck being slidably mounted in the slot, and at least one of the one or more enlarged ends being sized

to pass laterally through the wide portion of the slot but not through the narrow portion of the slot; and

a retaining element positioned in the slot to prevent movement of the neck from the narrow portion of the slot to the wide portion of the slot, while permitting sliding movement of the neck within the narrow portion of the slot.

28. (Cancelled)

29. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 27, further comprising a bias element configured to urge the post towards an end of the slot.

30. (Original) The folding knife of claim 29, wherein the retaining element supports the bias element in the slot.

31. (Original) The folding knife of claim 30, wherein the retaining element includes an elongate portion extending into the narrow portion of the slot, and the elongate portion supports the bias element.

32. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 27, wherein the retaining element is configured to expand upon receipt of an expander, the folding knife further comprising an expander received by the retaining element and configured to secure the retaining element in the slot.

33. (Original) The folding knife of claim 32, wherein the retaining element includes a hole configured to receive the expander.

34. (Original) The folding knife of claim 32, wherein the expander includes a ball bearing.

35. (Original) The folding knife of claim 27, wherein the handle includes an end with an exposed exterior edge surface, the exposed exterior edge surface includes a latching element, and further wherein the at least one of the one or more enlarged ends being configured to engage the latching element of the exposed exterior edge surface when the blade is in the open position.

36.-44. (Cancelled)

45. (Previously Presented) A folding knife, comprising:

a handle;

a blade coupled at a tang end to the handle so as to be movable between a closed and an open position;

a slot formed in the blade and having first and second ends, the first end and a portion of the slot extending between the first and second ends having a first width, and the second end having a second width greater than the first width;

a retaining element removably positioned within the second end of the slot; and

a locking element positioned within the slot and slidable therein while the retaining element is positioned within the second end of the slot, the retaining element preventing the locking element from sliding into the second end of the slot.

46. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 45 wherein the retaining element comprises an aperture and an expander positioned within the aperture.

47. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 46 wherein the retaining element extends from the second end of the slot into the portion of the slot extending between the first and second ends.

48. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 45, comprising a bias element extending within the slot from the retaining element toward the first end of the slot.

49. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 45, comprising a post extending within the slot and transversely with respect to the blade such that the post is slidable along at least a portion of the length of the slot, the post including a neck having a third width, less than the first width, and further including first and second ends having fourth and fifth widths, respectively, and positioned on respective sides of the blade, each of the fourth and fifth widths being greater than the first width and less than the second width.

50. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 49 wherein the fourth and fifth widths are equal.

51. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 49 wherein the neck is substantially cylindrical.

52. (Previously Presented) The folding knife of claim 49 wherein the slot and post are positioned such that, when the blade is in the open position, the ends of the post can engage a locking feature of the handle, thereby locking the blade in the open position.

53. (Previously Presented) A folding knife, comprising:  
a handle including an end face having a first locking element;  
a blade pivotably connected to the handle in a manner allowing pivoting of the blade from a closed position in which the blade extends along the handle, to an open position in which the blade extends away from the handle;  
a slot in the blade, the slot including a narrow region and an wide region;  
a post having first and second knobs, and a neck portion extending between the first and second knobs, the neck portion positioned in the narrow region of the slot for sliding movement along the blade, the post being movable within the narrow region of the slot between a first position in which the post engages at least part of the first locking element in a manner preventing pivoting of the blade relative to the handle, and a second position spaced from the first locking element in which the blade is free to pivot relative to the handle;

a retaining element positioned in the wide region of the slot to prevent movement of the post into the wide portion of the slot the retaining element being configured to expand upon receipt of an expander;

an expander received by the retaining element, whereby the retaining element is secured in the slot; and

the end face of the handle being configured such that, as the blade is pivoted from the closed position towards the open position, the post, when in the first position, is spaced from the end face of the handle for at least approximately 75% of the total travel of the blade from the closed position to the open position.

54. (Previously Presented) A folding knife, comprising:

a handle;

a blade pivotably connected to the handle so that the blade is configured to move between a closed position extending along the handle and an open position extending away from the handle, the blade including a slot, the slot including a wide portion and a narrow portion;

a locking mechanism configured to lock the blade in the open position, the locking mechanism including a post having a neck and one or more enlarged ends, the neck being slidably mounted in the slot, and at least one of the one or more enlarged ends being sized to pass laterally through the wide portion of the slot but not through the narrow portion of the slot; and

a retaining element positioned in the slot to prevent movement of the neck from the narrow portion of the slot to the wide portion of the slot, and including an elongate portion extending into the narrow portion of the slot.

55. (New) The folding knife of claim 17 wherein the post, while in the second portion of the slot, is spaced from the edge surface such that, during blade motion from the closed position towards the open position, the post does not contact the edge surface until just prior to engaging the latching corner of the exposed exterior edge surface as the blade reaches the open position.